Integrated Leadership
Course Class *2*

Key Question #5
Section

RTI Implementation

Saturday, January 2, 2016   9:27 AM

You will find additional resources and today's full PowerPoint on the "For Leaders" page of TNCore by clicking here. You may keep running notes by clicking anywhere to the right of the slides and beginning to type.

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Key Question Five

Establishing a culture of RTI[2]

At both the national and local level, there has been an increased focus on elementary grades reading achievement.

1. Research has demonstrated a strong link between early reading proficiency and later success including secondary academic performance, high school graduation and labor market outcomes[1].

2. To support students who struggle with the skills that build reading proficiency, Tennessee developed a framework for addressing individual student skill-building needs. This framework is called Response to Instruction and Intervention (RTI[2]).

1. For example, see the Annie E. Casey Foundation's 2013 report: "Early Warning Confirmed: A Research Update on Third-Grade Reading." Retrieved from: http://www.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/AECF-EarlyWarningConfirmed-2013.pdf.
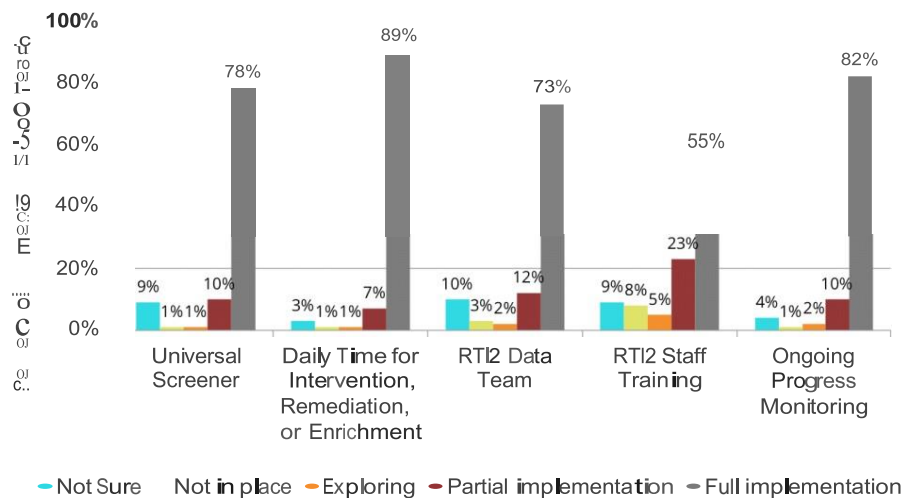
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In May of 2015, elementary schools were asked to share their status with RTI² implementation.

Elementary educators were asked to mark the following questions with *full implementation, partial implementation, exploring, not in place, or not sure.*

1. Is your school using a universal screener to identify students' skill deficits?

2. Is your school providing daily time for interventions, remediation, and enrichment?

3. Is your school convening an RTI² team where members can make decisions about students?

4. Is your school delivering training to help staff understand the components of the RTI² framework?

5. Is your school establishing a process for ongoing progress monitoring?

Most elementary school educators reported full or partial implementation of RTI2.

	Not Sure	Not in place	Exploring	Partial implementation	Full implementation
Universal Screener	9%	1%	1%	10%	78%
Daily Time for Intervention, Remediation, or Enrichment	3%	1%	1%	7%	89%
RTI2 Data Team	10%	3%	2%	12%	73%
RTI2 Staff Training	9%	8%	5%	23%	55%
Ongoing Progress Monitoring	4%	1%	2%	10%	82%

Defining High Implementation

- Looking more closely at Tennessee's schools, our data and research team identified 153 schools that were high implementers.

High Implementers were defined as:
- 3 out of 5 indicators showed "full implementation" with 85% of responders

AND

- the other indicators were marked as "partial implementation" or "full implementation"

High Implementation occurred in 153 out of roughly 600 schools.

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On the surface, implementation of key RTI practices looks similar across all schools.

- **Universal screening** is conducted three times per year.

- Schools **progress monitor** students receiving Tier II or III interventions at least every two weeks.

- Schools meet regularly to review data and engage in **data-based decision-making.**

- Schools allocate a **variety of staff members** to support data use and RTI[2].

- Staff involved in the implementation of RTI[2] receive some **training,** often from different sources.

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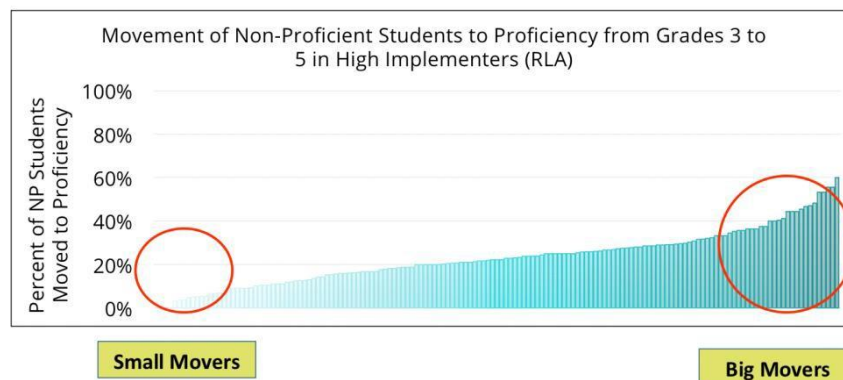
Characteristics of High Implementation Schools

- These schools appeared to have high level of RTI^2 structures.

- The high implementation schools ranged in size, demographics, and region.

- When looking at achievement results, there were wide differences in how high RTI^2 implementation schools performed on student reading achievement outcomes.

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Some high implementers have been more successful than others at moving non-proficient students to proficiency on reading TCAP.

Movement of Non-Proficient Students to Proficiency from Grades 3 to 5 in High Implementers (RLA)

Percent of NP Students Moved to Proficiency

100%
80%
60%
40%
20%
0%

Small Movers

Big Movers

How does RTI^2 implementation look differently in these two groups of schools?

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To better understand how elementary schools are implementing RTI[2], we conducted phone interviews with staff at six small movers and six big movers.

- Questions included:

  – Does your school have goals for moving non-proficient students to proficiency?

  – How does your school use RTI[2] to support student learning?
    - *Probing questions about implementation history, staffing, universal screeners, progress monitoring, impact on core instruction, and challenges*

  – Could you describe what RTI[2] implementation looks like in your school?

  – What other strategies does your school use to support student learning?

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Digging Deeper

- You have four schools' shortened descriptions.

- Read each phone interview description.

- In your digital materials, you have a digital note catcher to capture your observations from the four schools.

- After you complete your observations, share your observations with your table and prepare to share out.

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How is data approached and used

What is the approach to staffing?

School A

How are intervention resources selected and used?

How are faculty engaged in the RTI^2 process?

How is data approached and used

What is the approach to staffing?

School B

How are intervention resources selected and used?

How are faculty engaged in the RTI2 process?

How is data approached and used

What is the approach to staffing?

School C

How are intervention resources selected and used?

How are faculty engaged in the RTI2 process?

How is data approached and used

What is the approach to staffing?

School D

How are intervention resources selected and used?

How are faculty engaged in the RTI^2 process?

Below are the stories of four Tennessee elementary schools that vary by size, location, and demographics.

In the last few years, each of these schools has reorganized in an effort to meet state RTI^2 mandates and guidelines. They are now, by any measure, full and willing participants in the RTI^2 program. On the surface, the implementation of key RTI^2 practices looks similar across all schools.

However, when looking deeper, each of these schools has a unique approach to RTI^2 implementation that has produced different outcomes: School A and B are big movers. Schools C and D are small movers. So, what does this mean? Identifying individual school's strengths and weaknesses and uncovering how schools are being strategic about RTI^2 implementation has important implications for the student and teacher experience.

School A

School A's history with RTI began six years prior to the statewide adoption of the RTI^2 framework, when it was asked by district staff to pilot an RTI program. During the early stages of implementation, School A lacked any "sophisticated" means for identifying struggling students and only had one staff member (a full-time RTI^2 coach) who was responsible for delivering all interventions. This RTI coach, who has remained in the position since that time, indicated that "it required very little of teachers as far as their own progress monitoring."

Over time, with the transition to RTI^2, School A shifted how it assesses its students and provides support to learners.

One of the first changes involved the "major sacrifice" of reallocating funds designated for classroom teachers and hiring two full-time interventionists (in addition to the existing RTI^2 coach). To support continuous growth of specialized knowledge, staff participate in regular professional learning opportunities at both the district and school level. For example, the RTI^2 coach participates in a weekly Skype session and a monthly, district-wide PLC with other RTI^2 coaches.

Further, the administration started emphasizing a shared, "collective responsibility" for RTI^2 implementation among the classroom teachers and RTI^2 staff. RTI^2 is now a "group effort" with "many hands on deck," anchored by regular communication among staff and grade-level data meetings every four and a half weeks in which the administration, RTI^2 coach and interventionists, special educators, specialists and teachers have conversations about students and engage in data-based decision-making. During these meetings, staff use data from a variety of sources (e.g., the AIMSweb universal screener, past TCAP results, cognitive ability tests, behavior tracking data, other diagnostic assessments, teachers' progress monitoring, and parent updates) to craft detailed intervention plans that focus on the "whole child" and can be tweaked as necessary to reflect the teachers' and RTI^2 staff's understanding of the students with whom they work.

Students receive Tier II and Tier III interventions in small groups from the two full-time interventionists, while other students participate in enrichment or grade-level practice activities in larger groups run by classroom teachers or highly-trained educational assistants. Some classroom teachers are "hand selected" to provide Tier II interventions based on their instructional strengths.

Intervention periods are staggered by grade-level to allow for efficient distribution of resources (including the RTI^2 interventionists, who are available to work with each grade). In the past year, staff delivering the interventions have moved away from using set programs for their groups and have focused on "pulling pieces from different [sources]" to provide students with a more individualized, engaging experience. The RTI^2 coach summarized School A's current, more fluid approach to RTI^2 implementation: "there is no hard and fast [way to

do this). It's about using knowledge and data" to do what's best for the "whole child." He/she also cautioned, "RTI^2 is in conjunction to, not instead of that tier I. Tier I, it's still so important . . . No intervention will ever remediate good Tier I instruction."

School B

School B has had some sort of RTI^2 structure in place for the past nine years and, according to the principal, started RTI^2 a "year early" so that the staff could "figure out how [they wanted] things to be." This "struggle" was important. The principal explained that he/she could have said "this is how we are going to do this," but instead had teachers "find out on their own" what was working or not working so that they could "own it." The principal added, "I've forced my teachers reflect on what they do . . . I want them to embrace (it)." Additional implementation support has come from School B's literacy/math leader and its former Title I teacher, who now serve as RTI^2 interventionists. They attend a number of state-and CORE-facilitated professional learning opportunities. They also frequently communicated what they have learned to other staff members in an effort to encourage successful school-wide implementation of RTI^2.

School B's staff conducts STAR assessments at the beginning, middle, and end of each year. These data points, along with classroom performance, teacher observations, and "drill down" activities to identify specific student needs, are used by the principal, two interventionists, and the rest of the RTI^2 team to create intervention groups. Staff members use EasyCBM to monitor students' progress on a weekly basis (alternating between reading and math); the staff makes changes to groups "based on what skills [students) have mastered" and what the data suggest is most appropriate for the child. This represents a change in School B's culture that has influenced their staff's approach to student learning. The principal commented, "We really use [data) to guide a lot of what we do. That has been a change...in the last ten years. The teachers now are very comfortable being able to look at those reports and look at those instructional plans that STAR creates."

The two interventionists oversee all RTI^2 interventions and work with students assigned to Tier III groups. Five teacher aides (who receive "a lot" of training from the interventionists} are responsible for delivering Tier II interventions. In addition, two retired teachers hired by the school are each responsible for providing reading and math remediation to "bubble kids" who require additional assistance.

Students meet during a grade-level "Skill Time" for 30 to 60 minutes each day, switching classes to join the group to which they have been assigned. All students who receive Tier II or Tier III interventions meet in one room, the "RTI^{2}class," and work with teachers or aides in groups of three to five. In order to support the "RTI^2 class" at each grade-level and use available space more strategically, aides travel around the school with mobile carts filled with different materials and resources. The principal expressed the belief that School B's style of RTI^2 implementation is beneficial to students: "If we have a foundation [of reading skills] that's like Swiss cheese, [RTI^2) plugs up those holes."

School C

School C began implementing RTI^2 at the beginning of the 2014-2015 school year when it became a requirement of the state. The current principal also began her position during the 2014-2015 school year. Over the past two years, select staff members (e.g., the principal, assistant principal, and instructional coaches) have participated in RTI^2 professional learning opportunities offered by the district. The instructional coaches subsequently brought this information back to the school and provided "in house" professional development to other staff members. However, the principal reported that the staff didn't attend any training delivered by the state or their regional CORE office.

The process of organizing RTI^2 intervention groups begins with staff using the STAR assessment to screen students and get a "base" that helps them "decide who needs to be in the conversation." The principal explained, "We don't put kids in reading and math intervention at the same time. We always default to reading if there's a problem with both. Then, from there, we have a lot of discussions with the teacher about other things and other data from the classroom." After determining which interventions students require, School C monitors progress regularly, using STAR every two weeks for students receiving Tier II interventions and AIMSWeb weekly for students receiving Tier III interventions.

Information and data gathered through this process are often reviewed and discussed during RTI^2 grade-level data review meetings, which occur every four to five weeks. Staff delivering interventions have "homework" before these meetings and must bring additional evidence to support any suggested changes to the instructional plans of the students with whom they work.

The principal stated that they often feel "uncomfortable taking away support" once they've added it to the student's support system, but the principal added that they've been thinking more about changes within interventions and moving students to different groups when they have adequate data points available.

Access to different types of data has also pushed School C to start thinking about modifications to Tier I instruction. The principal stated, "we'll go back to Tier I instruction and say, 'okay, what can we fix . . . for this student.' I don't know if there is a specific thing I can say we've changed. But, I think it's put a bigger spotlight on [data) and opened us up to being more individualized."

Students receive Tier II Interventions from classified Instructional assistants and Tier III Interventions from certified classroom teachers. All students at a certain grade level who are receiving Tier II, Tier III, or special education interventions are "pulled out" during a designated intervention period to work in small groups at a table in the hallway or a small table in the back of the classroom. Special education interventions take place in special education classrooms.

The principal acknowledged that they "are a little limited on space, as a lot of people are," but that they do their best to maintain a quiet environment. Overall, the principal expressed optimism: "I believe, in the long run, RTI^2 will contribute to moving non-proficient students to proficient. I don't know that it has yet. It definitely will."

School D

School D also began implementing RTI[1] at the beginning of the 2014-2015 school year. To support initial efforts, school staff have attended two trainings during district learning days and received professional development during school-based PLC meetings from the school psychologist, guidance counselor, and a first grade teacher who sits on the administrative team.

School D uses a standards based benchmark to place students into tiered intervention groups and EasyCBM to monitor students on a weekly (Tier III) or bi-weekly (Tier II) basis. These data points are discussed during weekly PLCs and administrative team meetings, where staff members "review the progress of each student from Tier II and III"

Staff do not use EasyCBM to monitor the progress of students who are not receiving an intervention.

Students receive daily RTI[1] interventions in math and reading from classroom teachers during separate 30-minute blocks for each subject area. Students are split into small groups while the teacher circulates around the room to provide *Tier* II and *Tier* III interventions and enrichment, one group at a time.

To facilitate focused, differentiated work in a classroom of 25-30 students, teachers often have students work individually on a variety of computer programs such as iStation, iReady, or EasyCBM tutorials.

Teachers agreed that RTI[1] implementation is supporting the students; however, they expressed some concern about the speed of progress. One teacher stated, "I'm seeing growth, but, am I seeing enough for what is expected in 3rd grade?"

What were your observations?

How is data approached and used?	What is the leader's approach to staffing?
How are intervention resources selected and used?	How are faculty engaged in the RTI^2 process?

II

Debrief: PRINCIPALS

Big movers with high implementation:

- Maximize staffing decisions; ensure the "right" teachers are teaching the appropriate interventions, remediation **and** enrichment
- Create staffing structures that best support student needs, and in some cases, actively evaluate staff strengths and weaknesses to match students with adults who are well-equipped to help them succeed.
- Create scheduling structures to use all available time to create staggered, grade-level intervention periods that allow for the sharing of staff and materials
- Find open space to provide an isolated, small group environment in which students can focus their attention on skill-based learning activities

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Debrief: SCHOOL CULTURE

Big movers with high implementation:

- Use data from multiple, appropriate sources to guide the RTI^2 decision-making process

- With multiple data sources, the data team paints a holistic picture of the child's needs

- Attach tailored interventions to students' full data picture

- A culture of continuous improvement is established (student progress discussions go beyond the data team meetings, with constant communication between staff members to facilitate an atmosphere of collaborative, subjective judgement)
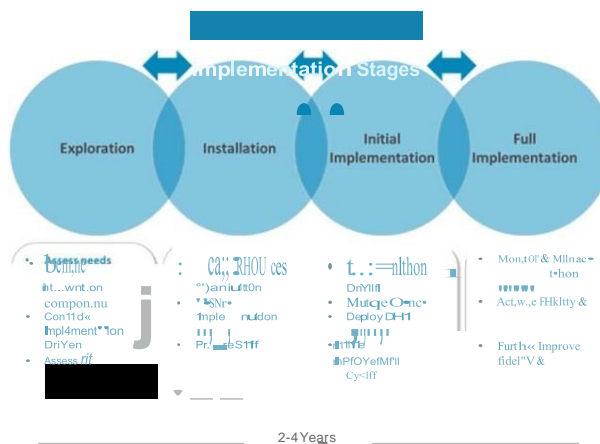
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Big movers with high implementation:

- Take an "all in" approach to RTI^2 implementation

- Encourage "collective ownership" and continuous engagement of the RTI^2 framework

- Learn from the early stages of implementation in order to create a school-based approach that is both standardized and customizable

Phases of Implementation

Schools in Phases of Implementation

- Where would you place School A?

- Where would you place School B?

- Where would you place School C?

- Where would you place School D?

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- Where would you place School A?

- Where would you place School B?

- Where would you place School C?

- Where would you place School D?

Discussion

- Where is your school?

- Where would you like your school to be?

- What key actions need to occur to get your school there?

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- Where is your school?

- Where would you like your school to be?

- What key actions need to occur to get your school there?

Additional Resources

[RTI Scenarios](#)

[RTI Debrief Graphic](#)

[Tennessee Department of Education RTI Resources](#)